



SUCCESS STORY

Innovative Pregnancy Support Services Introduced at the Ibrahim Ahmed Model Clinic in Sulaymaniyah



Photo: USAID / PHCPI

Ms. Narmin Najmaddin, Medical Assistant at the Ibrahim Ahmed PHC Clinic, takes the blood pressure of a pregnant woman during a routine check-up visit.



Photo: USAID / PHCPI

The Antenatal Advisor at the USAID-supported PHC Clinic provides training to pregnant women on pregnancy, birthing exercises, and the importance of breastfeeding their newborn baby.

Decades of war have resulted in a decline in basic public services in Iraq. The Government of Iraq (GOI) struggles to cope with the impact of ongoing sectarian violence and the movement of internally displaced persons, which places added burden on the already overwhelmed health system that is struggling to provide quality primary health care to the population. The USAID Primary Health Care Project in Iraq (PHCPI) is working with Iraq's Ministry of Health (MOH) to strengthen its delivery of primary health care services throughout the country, focusing on maternal and child health services for the most vulnerable Iraqis. The project is also assisting in upgrading 36 PHC clinics throughout the country to serve as "model" clinics. These model clinics will act as a prototype for replication and future GOI investment in PHC.

The Ibrahim Ahmed Primary Health Care Model Clinic in Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq serves a catchment population of 6500. The clinic sees approximately 75 patients per day, including 10-15 young pregnant women. During pregnancy, women are encouraged to visit the clinic every month for routine antenatal care, which includes checks on blood pressure, iron levels to detect anemia, blood sugar levels to detect early onset of diabetes, weight, and growth of the baby. They are also provided counseling on proper nutrition and vitamin intake during pregnancy. If any abnormalities are revealed during the visit, pregnant women are immediately referred to the local MOH hospital where full support to the mother and baby can be provided to ensure a safe pregnancy and a healthy delivery.

In addition to regular antenatal check-ups, the Ibrahim Ahmed clinic also offered free classes for pregnant women that focus on stretching exercises and breathing techniques to help prepare for a safe delivery and counseling on the importance of breastfeeding. USAID/PHCPI is supporting this clinic through the procurement of new lab equipment that enables early detection of pregnancy-related illnesses and outfitting of a training room where these pregnancy classes are offered. This clinic is setting the standard for comprehensive antenatal care of pregnant women at the community level.